



MEDIA CONTACTS:

Thysha M. Shabazz or Drake R. Holliday

AKILA WORKSONGS, Inc.

Phone: 718.756.8501 main

Email: pr@akilaworksongs.com

Facebook Fan Page: AKILAWORKSONGS • **Twitter:** @akilaworksongs

FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE: November 3, 2010

**NY STATE NOT-FOR-PROFITS URGE THE
RESTORATION OF \$190 MILLION IN FUNDS!
Campaign to “Restore Community Services” Kicks Off
With Rally at Governor Paterson’s Harlem Home: **Fri., Nov. 12, 2010****

New York, NY - - The **Cultural Equity Group** (CEG), a network of New York community-based not-for-profits that includes arts, educational, advocacy, legal, senior citizen, and other types of organizations, announces that they will not have the resources operate if Governor David A. Paterson does not restore \$190 million in what is known as *member-items* in the fiscal year 2010/2011. These not-for-profits have worked for decades to help stabilize communities that are widely labeled as underserved, at-risk, disenfranchised, and/or poor performing communities. Governor Paterson's decision to unilaterally cut member-item funding will not only cripple their ability to operate, but will also lead to the closing of many community-based organizations. In response, CEG has launched an urgent campaign to bring public attention to this crisis. The state-wide campaign entitled **Restore Community Services**, launched Monday, November 1. It includes letter-writing, phone banking, a rally at Governor Paterson’s home in Harlem on **Friday, November 12** from 10:00 am to 12:00 noon, and a rally on the steps of the state capitol in Albany on **Monday, November 15** (*see details below*).

Senior Citizen Centers Will Likely Close

CEG’s constituents represent tens of thousands of people of color in New York, especially Brooklyn, Harlem, and the Bronx, communities that are largely under-served. The organizations have survived the recession thus far but are currently operating in a dangerous deficit because of Paterson’s actions. Some organizations may have to close. According to **Bobbie Sackman**, Director of Public Policy at **Council of Senior Centers & Services of NYC**, “All of New York State’s Senior Centers and Services benefit from a total of \$10 million in State member-items. By vetoing this relatively small amount of money in member-items, some centers will close, vehicles serving seniors will be taken off the road, meals-on-wheels programs will be cut, and staff will be laid off. The average senior

~ more ~

benefitting from these services is 77 years old. Member-items are not *pork*, they are the meat and potatoes of our organizations.”

“Adding Salt to the Wound”

CEG leaders maintain that they are not enemies of the governor, but are compelled, nonetheless, to create awareness about the negative effect of frozen funds. **Esmeralda Simmons**, a CEG leader and the founder and executive director of the **Center for Law and Social Justice at Medgar Evers College** states: “The Black, Latino, and Asian communities, from the onset, receive less funding than other communities in New York. To reduce the already small budget allotment even further is adding salt to the wound.”

Laurie Cumbo is another CEG leader who is also founder and executive director of **MoCADA**. Addressing the disparity mentioned by Simmons, Cumbo offers specifics: “An example of that disparity can be found in an agency such as the NYC Department of Cultural Affairs, which in 2008 stated that organizations of color accounted for 14% of their total programming budget, while the City of New York’s total population is comprised of over 60% of people of color.” Cumbo offered this insight at the public hearing held last week, called by NY State Senators **Ruth Hassell-Thompson**, **Kevin Parker**, and **Bill Perkins** (members of the New York State Black, Puerto Rican, Hispanic, and Asian Legislative Caucus). She adds: Nearly three quarters of the inmates of state prisons in New York come from the same seven neighborhoods of New York City: the South Bronx, Harlem, Brownsville, Bedford-Stuyvesant, South Jamaica, East New York, and the Lower East Side of Manhattan. By vetoing member items directed at cultural and social service institutions in communities of color, the Governor is stripping away resources from communities that are already suffering. This is a perfect recipe for keeping the New York State Prisons alive.

Dr. Marta Moreno Vega, another CEG leader who called for the hearing adds: “Not-for-profit institutions of color in New York—be they arts or advocacy or social justice related—play a vital role in people’s personal and professional lives. They help alleviate distress in underserved populations and they contribute to the economic development of neglected communities. For the governor to freeze funds from organizations that are, in many cases, the life blood of their communities actually contributes to the disenfranchisement of those communities.” Dr. Vega is the founder and executive director of **The Caribbean Cultural Center / African Diaspora Institute** and is a Board of Trustee at the New York State Council on the Arts.

Additional CEG leaders and/or supporters include the Center for Black Literature at Medgar Evers College, CUNY; the Harlem Arts Alliance; Harlem Film Museum; the Bronx Council on the Arts; AMERINDA, and others.

~ more ~

The Plan of Action

On November 15, Governor Paterson will hold a special session of the state legislature. CEG will push to make the restoration of member-item funding an agenda item. If member-items are not restored under Governor Paterson, then it will be extremely difficult to have the items included by the next administration.

Up until and including that day, the "Restore Community Services" campaign urges supporters to take the ten critical action steps (see below).

"Restore Community Services" Action Steps!

1. **JOIN** the campaign to "Restore Community Services" and tell friends and colleagues.
2. **MOBILIZE** your community to attend a State-Wide outdoor public rally on **Friday, November 12 from 10:00 am – 12:00 noon** in front of the Governor's home *
3. **MOBILIZE** your community to travel to Albany, NY on **Monday, November 15** to stand together at 9:00 am on the steps of the State Capital to urge the Governor and elected officials to restore member items. *
4. **WRITE A LETTER TO GOVERNOR PATERSON** (see address below) to explain how community services have made a positive impact on you, your family, and your community. The letter should clearly state that you want Governor Paterson to restore the \$190 million currently frozen.
5. **CALL GOVERNOR PATERSON** directly to express your concerns. The numbers are 518.474.4623 or 518.474.1041.
6. **CALL YOUR STATE SENATE/ASSEMBLY MEMBER(S)** and communicate with them about how cutting member items will negatively affect your organization or your community.
7. **UTILIZE SOCIAL MEDIA NETWORKS** such as Twitter, Facebook, blogs, and email to create on-line conversations surrounding the vetoing of these member-items.
8. Spread the word to friends, family, colleagues, and media as frequently as possible over the next two weeks (until Monday, November 15).
9. **CONTACT PRIVATE/PUBLIC FUNDING SOURCES** and inform them about the importance of the community services that depend on the member items that have been cut.
10. **TAKE THESE ACTION STEPS EVERY DAY UNTIL NOVEMBER 15.**

"Restore Community Services" Action Steps **Where to Write, Where to Rally**

Write Governor Paterson:

Governor David A. Paterson
State Capitol
Albany, NY 12224

Rally at Governor Paterson's Harlem Home

FRIDAY, NOVEMBER 12, 2010

10:00 am to 12:00 noon

45 W. 132nd Street

New York, NY (Harlem)

Between Malcolm X Blvd and 5th Avenue (in Lenox Terrace)

Rally in Albany (Meet Up in Harlem)

MONDAY, NOVEMBER 15, 2010

- Gather at **6:00 am** on Monday, November 15 at the Adam Clayton Powell Jr. State Office Building (aka the **Harlem State Office Building**) located at the corner of 125th Street and Adam Clayton Powell Jr. Boulevard (7th Avenue) in Harlem
- The bus trip to Albany costs \$10 round-trip
- Please bring cash!
- Call the **Harlem Arts Alliance** to reserve your seat: 347.735.4280 (first come, first seated)
- For more information about the bus trip, call 347.735.4280
- Destination: NY State Capitol, Albany, NY 12224 (2 Empire State Plaza in downtown Albany)

Media inquiries are directed to Thysha M. Shabazz or Drake R. Holliday at AKILA WORKSONGS, Inc. at pr@akilaworksongs.com or 718.756.8501

###